

The governors and the Congressional delegations of both Vermont and New Hampshire today joined together to urge the U.S. Department of Labor to move quickly to provide assistance to workers recently laid off at the Ethan Allen furniture plant in Beecher Falls, Vt.

Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas and New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch; Vermont Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders; Vermont Rep. Peter Welch; New Hampshire Sens. Judd Gregg and Jeanne Shaheen; and New Hampshire Reps. Paul Hodes and Carol Shea-Porter issued the following statement:

"Both New Hampshire and Vermont strongly urge the U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to approve the petitions for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) filed on behalf of the employees at the Ethan Allen plant in Beecher Falls. Ethan Allen has been committed to keeping a significant portion of its manufacturing in the United States while many of its competitors have exported their entire operations overseas. The ongoing national recession, in addition to foreign competition, has also significantly impacted this important employer for residents of both Vermont and New Hampshire.

"Following the closure of paper mills in the same region of Vermont and New Hampshire, the loss of these jobs at Ethan Allen is having a devastating impact in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom and New Hampshire's North Country.

"The Trade Act provides critical aid to workers, including access to health insurance, additional unemployment benefits and assistance in re-entering the workforce. The recent changes to the Act will be extremely beneficial to these workers while they work to find new job opportunities in the Northeast Kingdom and the North Country."

Trade Adjustment Assistance helps workers who lose their jobs because of increased imports, or shifts in production to foreign countries. The program provides eligible workers with career counseling, training, income support during training, job search assistance and access to a health coverage tax credit. Under new provisions passed as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), workers are eligible for additional unemployment benefits if they are enrolled in approved training, certain applicable relocation expenses, and certain health care insurance costs.